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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses wilderness preservation as related to outdoor leadership and explains how eco-tourism can promote preservation. Although historically, the wilderness in the United States was largely destroyed in the name of progress, our cultural heritage evolved from that wilderness. The Wilderness Act was the first legislation in the country that mandated public involvement in decisions affecting the country's land and natural resources. As wilderness areas become more scarce, they becomes more valuable. The growing appetite for an experience of the wilderness is the basis of "eco-tourism". Eco-tourism means touring the natural world, and is closely related to adventure travel, which is the fastest growing segment of the U.S. travel industry. Eco-tourism refers to economic activities generated by nature attractions, natural systems, and wild creatures. These activities will stimulate, for the purpose of sustaining renewable nature travel dollars, protection of resources that might otherwise be developed or destroyed through improper management or short-term exploitative resource development. Skills are needed by the outdoor professional leader in the following areas: (1) administrative, managerial, and inspirational leadership; (2) negotiation; (3) foreign languages; (4) political sensitivity; (4) vision; (5) entrepreneurship; (6) communications; (7) crisis management; (8) business, marketing, and finance; (9) computer literacy; and (10) appreciation for the wilderness. (KS)

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WILD PLACES, WILDLIFE, AND ECO-TOURISM: OUTDOOR LEADERSHIP DEMANDS IN THE NEW WORLD

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By

Sally A. G. Ranney

Whether we like it nor not, during the next decade our generation faces the most difficult challenge any generation has faced thus far. We will decide the fate of the natural world--of biodiversity. And with more population than the planet has ever experienced, demands for and uses of our outdoor resources will only continue to increase .

Wilderness is the centerpiece of biodiversity. And America's Wilderness Preservation System is the world's premier example of an approach that works to that end. Wilderness is the stabilizing factor for societies under fire to consume and exploit.

I have been asked to discuss wilderness preservation as related to outdoor leadership. First, I want to set the stage regarding the concept of wilderness: Why it is so important, and how it relates to leadership. Second, I will discuss eco-tourism, a predictable but unseeming alliance: It was unthinkable 10 years ago that the combination of commercial recreation and *wildness* would become a major trend in land use management and economic development. Third, I will outline what I believe to be the skills and qualities needed by the new generation of world resource and recreation leaders: No discussion or curriculum dealing with outdoor resources/recreation and its respective leadership can proceed with integrity or full dimension without addressing our responsibilities to biodiversity as prudent and ethical managers, politicians, educators, vendors, marketeers, recreation industry representatives, chambers of commerce, recreators, and planners.

Either by default or conscious decision we will choose to protect or lose forever the remaining wilderness in the United States, the rain forests of South America, elephants in Africa, hundreds of thousands of acres of unimaginable beauty, and scores upon scores of species. In making those choices we also decide the fate of humans as we cannot survive apart from our very source. (Global warming is a blessing in disguise. It is the lazy man's path to enlightenment about the consequences of human actions on natural systems.) Unlike many other pressing issues of our day, wilderness doesn't get a second chance. When paradise is paved, it's gone. Extinction is forever.

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So wilderness is no longer just cocktail conversation or beautiful four-color coffee table books. It is serious business, not only because the resource of wilderness is diminishing worldwide, but also because wildness is becoming the focal point of one of the fastest growing components of the travel industry. I'm referring to the travel phenomenon called eco-tourism.

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Before we look at the idea of eco-tourism, let's take a close look at the concept of wilderness.

There is great comfort in knowing that no government, no technology, no army can withstand the strength of an idea whose time has come. And so it was with the idea of protecting wilderness. In the beginning, it was thought to be dangerous. That, of course, simply validated it because an idea which can never be considered dangerous perhaps is not worthy of being called an idea in the first place (Don Marquis)!

But what was the idea, really? Was it a five-day hunt during which time one would cross no roads--a blank spot on the map? Or is it something more basic and primal?

When the concept of wilderness preservation was introduced, it was the first time in our country's history we recognized our next challenge was *restraint*. We were so used to frontier fever (and as Roderick Nash would say, still suffer from "frontier hangover"): conquering, mastering and dominating. The fact that the concept and its champions were met with resistance was evidenced by the many-year battle that surrounded passage of the Wilderness Act. Yes, wilderness was a different idea: to protect the place of wilderness where the genius of nature could go on unmanipulated, a counterpoint to development acknowledging four billion years of nature's wisdom and genetic secrets. The purpose of this system of untrammeled lands was also to protect the spirit of wildness, and to place a value on the benefits nature's solitude holds for man and other creatures alike.

It is no wonder this idea met with resistance. After all, we were blind for the most part to the virtues of wildness. We prided ourselves in hoeing, burning, cutting, building, settling, roading, using, stripping, scratching, taming, burning, selling, pawning, flooding, trading, digging, drilling and damming our lands. We did not recognize that our cultural heritage evolved from the very thing we were destroying. It is no accident of history that we are a nation of resourceful, ingenious, resilient, generous, independent people. These were all characteristics needed to survive in an expansive new land of wilderness, and thus it created our very national character.

Wilderness was actually the core idea (most people don't realize this unless they have traced the origins of the conservation movement) that spawned the most significant social movement of this century, perhaps of human history: the movement of environmentalism.

When enacted into law this idea was articulated in the Wilderness Act. As significant as the language itself was, the fact is, this was the first legislation in the country which mandated public involvement in decisions affecting the country's land and natural resources. It opened the doors for public participation to take place during administrative decision-making processes, not after the fact when the issues had already migrated to Congress. It gave the public the opportunity to be proactive versus reactive, and it changed significantly and forever how public land managers viewed their mandates because it redefined "the public

interest," consequently changing the training of professionals in the field of forest/resource management.

Twenty-six years later here we are: 91 million acres, some 40 million of which are in Alaska, 3.6 million acres per year, .01 acres per U.S. citizen. Almost every ecosystem is represented. The most glaring omission to date is a tallgrass prairie.

Protecting free-flowing rivers rests on the same philosophical and ecological foundation as wilderness. Rivers are the circulatory system of the planet. The Wild and Scenic River System encompasses approximately 11,000 miles of free flowing rivers out of a total 3.2 million miles of rivers in the U.S. Of that 3.2 million miles, only 60,000 miles have been inventoried as still being left in a condition that meet requirements for inclusion into the system.

Close your eyes. If you can imagine for a moment a map of the United States painted all green, all wilderness, with a few red dots on the East Coast representing development and settlement. This is 300 years ago. Now imagine the same map painted all red, with only a few dots of green, primarily in the West and Alaska. That is protected wilderness, a very small percentage of the U.S., about 4% to be more precise. What power has been wielded upon the land in such a short time to reduce to those few green dots what nature took four billion years to create. Carl Sagan says that the society that survives is the one that retains at least half of its territory in parks and wildlands: a provocative perspective that makes one pause.

What is the unfinished business? Some examples. Southeastern Utah Bureau of Land Management lands: 5.1 million acres of proposed wilderness; magnificent sandstone canyons of unparalled beauty, some rising 1,500 feet over head and only as wide as the Great Wall of China (four horses abreast). Montana: six million acres proposed for protection along with Idaho's nine million acres (where two of the nation's deepest canyons are located, deeper than the Grand Canyon). The California Desert. The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) which has become the national showdown between consumption and conservation, oil and wilderness, ideologies and values. But even more important than the ANWR debates perhaps is the poignant thought that 180,000 non-voting caribou depend upon our decisions.

A different idea, wilderness? Yes, a world unique, an envied land-use management approach. As we continue to entrap ourselves in an evermore crowded, sedentary and synthetic world and wilderness becomes more scarce, it becomes evermore valuable--priceless actually--just as Central Park has become to millions of New Yorkers. Man's hunger for wild country, its solitude, pristine waters, clean air, and opportunities to commune with wild creatures of the planet is already showing signs of becoming ravenous.

This appetite is called eco-tourism; the predictions are it will continue to grow, and, consequently, a new breed of professionals will be needed. Eco-tourism is predicated upon touring the natural world--and the wilder, less disturbed, the better. Eco-tourism is closely

aligned with adventure travel which is called by the *Wall Street Journal* the fastest growing segment of the U.S. travel industry, accounting for 10% of the $275 billion Americans spend annually on tourism. *Fortune Magazine* recently stated that eco-tourism is the fastest growing industry in the minimum environmental impact business. And *American Demographics* say their data indicate more Americans are going to be lured to the West by the promise of different and more adventurous, nature-related experiences. And there is a trend that Americans want to collect experiences now versus material goods.

The reason nature-based adventure travel is growing so rapidly is the increased public desire to be part of nature, and because the environment has become the number one social concern of the world community. Adventure travelers want experiences that are socially conscious, environmentally sound, healthful, bring them close to wildness, provide a personal challenge at some level, (e.g., learn a new skill), and an opportunity to participate one-to-one with nature.

Adventure travel includes experiences such as river rafting, sea kayaking, llama and camel trekking, flyfishing, horseback pack trips and backpacking, scuba diving, cultural explorations, photographic expeditions, and a variety of other nature-based activities.

Nature-related adventure travel is viewed in two categories: *hard* and *soft*. Hard adventure appeals to a smaller segment of the market, and requires past experience in the specific activity in which one is engaged (e.g., climbing expeditions). Those who take hard adventure trips need to be physically fit and mentally strong. Hard adventure is high risk, attracts the person who wants to test individual limits, and is less concerned with comfort and convenience.

Soft adventure appeals to a much broader and more diverse market. This market is comprised of individuals who have less physical conditioning, but who are in general good health. In most cases prior experience is not necessary to participate. Yet the soft adventure traveler is looking for a trip (experience) that will challenge him/her in a natural setting, provide some conveniences and some assurances that, although there is risk involved, the activity is as safe as it can possibly be. In both cases, the adventure traveller profile is currently referred to in the travel industry as the (F)ree (I)ndependent (T)raveler (FIT).

Eco-tourism, defined by this author in *Tour and Travel News*, is:

> ...value-added tourism, dedicated to preserving,and financially supporting the environment while creating revenue by tapping the higher spending nature traveller. Eco-tourism is the concept that economic activities (eco-revenues) generated by nature attractions, natural systems, and wild creatures will stimulate protection of resources for the purpose of sustaining renewable nature travel dollars which might otherwise be developed or destroyed through improper management or short-term exploitive resource development.

The implications this growth holds for the economy and associated industries is just now being recognized, and is evident in the statistics. I was appointed by President Reagan in 1986 to serve on the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors (PCAO). Our studies showed that 25 years ago 5,000 people had rafted a river. Now the number exceeds 35 million. There are 62 million fishermen, 53 million boaters, and 24 million hunters in the U.S. If averaged over a year, there are about 1 million visits a day to national parks. Outdoor recreation on federal lands, where the majority of wildlands and spacious natural environments exist for adventure travel/eco-tourism activities, has increased 138% in the last 20 years. The eco-tourist spends more than the traditional *sun and fun* vacationer for the same period of time, and a recent travel agent survey shows that 21 % of the clients booked are searching for outdoor adventure travel opportunities.

A recent study by World Wildlife Fund (WWF) demonstrated there is growing public awareness of the environment and conservation. This has precipitated an environmentally conscious travel consumer who is looking for both the wilds and socially beneficial ways to spend vacation time, e.g., trips through Earthwatch, American Wilderness Adventures, Audubon.

Although eco-tourism is perceived as a primarily Second and Third World phenomenon for such countries as Belize, Costa Rica, Kenya and Brazil, areas that are nature-bountiful, it is rapidly becoming evident that nature travel dollars can also protect natural areas and stimulate depressed rural communities both domestically and overseas. In the western states of the U.S. this is particularly true. As a premier example of this principle at work is the protection of the Arkansas River in Colorado as a free-flowing river in order to protect the tourist dollars the rafting and fishing industries produce for local communities. In fact, in Colorado alone over $6 billion are generated annually from recreation on public lands. Tourism in Rwanda, Africa, sparked by the movie "Gorillas in the Mist," has all but shut down poaching of gorillas. Nothing Diane Fossey did during her life time, even the many National Geographic articles and speaking tours, did for the mountain gorilla what mass media did. The foreign exchange brought in by tourists wanting to view the gorillas is much more profitable over the long term than gorilla-hand ashtrays. Nova Scotia is promoting adventure travel as a destination focus with the lure of whale watching, eagle watching, ocean kayaking, wilderness camping and back-country canoeing along its 4,625 miles of maritime and marine features found nowhere else in the world in one geographic location. Kenya reports that conservation of wildlife and natural wild places is a better investment than development. It has a tourist industry of 750,000 travelers spending $250 million annually. Utah is finally realizing its canyon country might be more valuable intact than mined for tar sands. Patagonia, Argentina, is interested in an eco-tourism plan for a region of some seven million roadless acres. In the Alti region of the Soviet Union, a resort destination community is being planned around the attraction of wilderness. The Soviets want to keep the wilderness intact, but also need foreign exchange and joint ventures.

Mt. St. Helens' eruption and Yellowstone's fires, both considered ecological disasters, have generated more visitors now than ever before. The fishery in Yellowstone is

healthier than it has been in over 50 years because nutrients from the fire have percolated into the streams. Both areas are the ultimate in eco-tourism; people want to see nature in action.

The potential benefits of eco-tourism according to the WWF study are that it can 1) "stimulate the development of natural parks and reserves through debt-for-nature swaps or better management of land and water resources, 2) create capitalization based on the rapidly increasing interest in ecology and nature by the traveling public, and 3) provide an economic incentive for sustainable management of ecosystems because of the renewable economic resource potential."

The danger in eco-tourism is that the hunger for increased revenue or foreign exchange can kill the golden goose. If managers, politicians, chambers of commerce, concessionaires, travel agents and others are not responsible in their marketing and not firmly grounded in their intentions and vision, sustainable ecological boundaries will be overstepped. Too many tourists can deteriorate the very resource and experience they are seeking.

Designation of a wilderness, a park or wildlife area is not the problem that creates too many tourists and over use; lack of proper management is. The Galapagos, for example, generates the revenue which supports Ecuador's entire park system. When established it was determined that the carrying capacity was 25,000 visitors. The carrying capacity remains the same but politics have changed. Last year, 87,000 were allowed to visit. Consequently, there are visible problems. Wilderness areas in the U.S., particularly those close to metropolitan areas, experience the same problems. An example is Indian Peaks on Colorado's Front Range. Trailing, trash, over-used campsites, and vegetative damage are common, but thanks to a new management plan are now under control.

The erosive impact of nature-related tourism, particularly in wild areas, must not go unattended. Participation of the travel industry in environmental and conservation efforts has been scant at best. Colorado's Tourism Board is guilty of effective marketing without conservation responsibility. Last year, ASTA (Association of Travel Agents) finally held a conference to address the travel industry's impact on the environment and recently formed a committee to monitor the situation. There is no code of ethics for travel agents or adventure travel promoters on how to sell wilderness or eco-tourism. Travel agents should be prominent leaders in educating clients and creating political clout for preservation. The travel industry should, for example, host an annual environmental summit for trade members, politicians, environmentalists, and educators. Travel agents are one of the prime promoters of eco-tourism activities, yet have little if any consciousness about conservation issues or environmental responsibilities associated with this lucrative industry.

So, the unfathomable has happened; wild-ness, both rivers and land and their wild creatures have an economic value. A pioneer in documenting the economic values of wilderness and wild rivers, American Wildlands has published several studies establishing the

economic values and benefits of wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, and pristine versus disturbed watersheds. We are also co-sponsoring with the Adventure Travel Society (ATS) an International Eco-Tourism and Adventure Tourism Conference next September that will be held in Colorado. Participants will include ministers of commerce, environment, and tourism from around the world: land managers; planners; educators; environmentalists; travel industry representatives; tour operators; and others planning for or associated with eco-tourism challenges and problems.

If properly approached, eco-tourism can be the proverbial win-win for the environment in general, wilderness and wildlife in particular, and scores of communities, regions, countries. Elizabeth Boo writes,

> Park managers are proposing to develop tourism programs as a means of generating income for park management. Development agencies are interested because of the potential economic benefits available to populations in surrounding areas. Tour operators want to further promote nature tourism. Conservationists need economic incentives to promote conservation and see specialized tourism as a way to integrate wildlands protection with rural development. In short, eco-tourism is a model of development in which natural and wild areas become a planned part of the tourism economic base.

And, because its' a business eco-tourism provides jobs, not platitudes.

If appropriately viewed, managed, and protected, natural areas and ecosystems can continue to generate eco-revenues consistent with nature's capacity to accommodate humans. It is clearly a matter of choice, balance, and values. But what kind of leadership is going to be needed given changing demographics, economics, public demands, complex issues, and a world that is becoming increasingly smaller and more crowded?

Administrative leadership and managerial leadership is a must. I believe those skills can be taught and are being taught. I'm convinced, however, we have a drought of inspirational leadership within this profession, within the universities, and obviously among world leadership, barring a few exceptions. Inspirational leadership combines philosophy, effective communication, vision, and a well-grounded personal passion and fire. It cannot be taught, but it can be exposed and stimulated by astute educators.

The new world outdoor professional leader must be an integrator: be able to synthesize the complexity of components of any given issue or problem. The key is knowing what questions to ask. The gaps can always be filled by the experts if the right questions are asked. The new leader must be a team player and be able to command bio-squads or eco-squads. These squads include communicators, marketers, industry representatives, biologists, economists, planners, ecologists, sociologists, and whatever specialists are necessary to effectively analyze and solve problems.

The ability to negotiate is paramount. I think everyone in a responsible position should be required to go through what I call the Henry Kissinger School of Arbitration.

As we become more and more a world community, knowledge of other languages is necessary. Japanese, Spanish, German, and Russian, along with English will be the major languages of the new world.

An educated, political sensitivity is essential. Everything dealing with natural resources and outdoor recreation, in fact every aspect of public land issues eventually gets deposited and decided in the political arena. An educated, political sensitivity can only be gained through direct experience. This means rolling up the sleeves and getting dirty, getting into the trenches in the middle of hot political situations and probably getting a bloody nose in the process--and more than once.

Vision is a real key to leadership in any field. It is the ability to synthesize from the macro to the micro; the ability to express a concept or an idea in a way others can embrace it as their own. An example: Buckminster Fuller changed the way not only a nation but an entire planet viewed their home with two simple words--"Spaceship Earth." The ability to create and use metaphors is very important to the expression of visions and the action of leadership.

Entrepreneurship, both its spirit and practical application means the ability to calculate risk and take it. The spirit of experimentation and innovation will be necessary.

Communications, writing skills, and understanding how to use the media will be vital. Learning how to write well is very important. It has been my experience that a person who cannot write well cannot think clearly.

Understanding crisis management so that it can be avoided means thinking on one's feet with a sound sense of the implications of future action as related to reaction. As the stakes of decisions become higher and more complicated it will be crucial for the leader to have this ability.

A good grounding in business, marketing, finance, and computer literacy is very important. There is a movement for market-driven public land management in this country, for example, and this trend alone demands such skills.

And perhaps most importantly, the new world outdoor leader must spend a great deal of time in wildness. For it is here that one becomes heart-connected and value-grounded to nature. It is here where the inner resources of resourcefulness, independence, risk taking, and resiliency come forth. If an outdoor leader loves nature first, then *collects* the skills necessary to be effective in its enjoyment, protection, and management, the products and ideas resulting will be of good quality.

Several of the characteristics or skills I have mentioned here can be taught. Some cannot because they are based upon the inner nature of the person. However, such qualities can be enhanced and brought out of dormancy through exposure; this is the true challenge for the educator.

I might also mention that multi-dimensional training can also be achieved through innovative joint degree programs, e.g., the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, where I received some of my training now has a joint forestry and business degree with the Yale School of Management, a chair funded by the Weyerhauser Corporation.

As professionals and as responsible human beings living on this small, wonderful planet, we must make quantum leaps in the next 50 years in the way we think about our world in order to effectively address the magnitude of situations we have created for ourselves. Outdoor leadership, because it deals with how people relate to the natural environment (our very source), is a pivotal field of great importance and responsibility for educators.